

existed for years in Somalia or the recent instability that has threatened to destabilize the region. And resurgent Taliban forces are contributing to growing levels of instability in Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, the U.S. presence in Iraq is being used as a recruiting tool for terrorist organizations from around the world. In Indonesia, home to historically moderate Islamic communities, conservative religious groups are becoming increasingly hostile towards the United States. In countries like Thailand, Nigeria, Mali, the Philippines, and elsewhere, militant groups are using U.S. policies in Iraq to fuel hatred towards the West.

The war in Iraq was, and remains, a war of choice. Some in this body, even those who have questioned the initial rationale for the war, suggest that we have no option but to remain in Iraq indefinitely. That argument is mistaken. We do have a choice, and that is whether we continue to devote so much of our resources to Iraq or whether we devote our resources to waging a global campaign against al-Qaida and its allies. We cannot do both.

If we choose to stay the course in Iraq, that means keeping large numbers of U.S. military personnel in Iraq indefinitely. It means continuing to ask our brave service members to somehow provide a military solution to a political problem, one that will require the will of the Iraqi people to resolve. Our military has achieved its mission in Iraq. Until we redeploy from Iraq, our very presence there will continue to generate new terrorists from around the world that will come to Iraq to attack U.S. troops.

Staying the course also means that our military's readiness levels will continue to deteriorate. It means that a disproportionate level of our military resources will continue to be focused on Iraq while terrorist networks strengthen their efforts worldwide.

The fight against the Taliban and al-Qaida in Afghanistan, too, will continue to suffer, as it has since we invaded Iraq. If we stay the course in Iraq, we won't be able to finish the job in Afghanistan.

Finally, if this were our Nation's choice, the safety of our country would be uncertain, at best. Terrorist organizations and insurgencies around the world will continue to use our presence in Iraq as rallying cry and recruiting slogan. Terrorist networks will continue to increase their sophistication and reach as our military capabilities are strained in Iraq.

I think we can see why this approach plays into the terrorists' hands—and even why bin Laden might suggest that the U.S. presence in Iraq is beneficial to his cause.

Of course, staying the course isn't a necessity.

The alternative is to establish a new national security strategy that addresses the wide-ranging nature of the threats that face our country.

This second choice will require replacing our current self-defeating national security strategy with a comprehensive one to defeat the terrorist networks that attacked us on 9/11. It will require a realignment of our finite resources. And it will also require a change in the way we view and discuss the threat to our country. We must reject phrases like "Islamic fascism," which are inaccurate and potentially offensive to peace-loving Muslims around the world. And we need to understand that there is no "central front" in this war, as the President argues.

The threats to our country are global, unlike any we have encountered in the past. Our enemy is not a state with clearly defined borders. We must respond instead to what is a loose network of terrorist organizations that do not function according to a strict hierarchy. Our enemy isn't one organization. It is a series of highly mobile, diffuse entities that operate largely beyond the reach of our conventional warfighting techniques. The only way to defeat them is to adapt our strategy and our capabilities and to engage the enemy on our terms and by using our advantages.

We have proven that we can not do that with our current approach in Iraq.

This choice—this new strategy—would require redeploying from Iraq and recalibrating our military posture overseas. It would require finishing the job in Afghanistan with increased resources, troops, and equipment. It would require a new form of diplomacy, scrapping the "transformational diplomacy" this administration has used to offend, push away, and ultimately alienate so many of our friends and allies, and replacing it with an aggressive, multilateral approach that would leverage the strength of our friends to defeat our common enemies.

It would also require the infusion of new capabilities and strength for our Armed Forces. By freeing up our special forces assets and redeploying our military power from Iraq, we would be better positioned to handle global threats and future contingencies. Our current state of readiness is unacceptable and must be repaired. Our National Guard, too, must be capable of responding to natural disasters and future contingencies.

Finally, this new approach would make our country safer. It would enable our Government to spend time addressing the wide range of threats our country faces. It would free up strategic capacity to deal with Iran, North Korea, and the Middle East, and to provide real leadership internationally against other enemies we all face, like poverty, HIV/AIDS, and corruption.

In sum, it would help return the United States to a place of pre-eminence in the world and would give us the opportunity to address the very real threats we face in the 21st century.

The bottom line is that we cannot afford to continue down the path the

President has set forth. We face real threats from al-Qaida and other terrorist organizations. Accordingly, we need to strengthen our military, diplomatic, and intelligence capabilities. And we need clear-sighted leadership with policies aimed at confronting that threat and with the credibility to mobilize the support of the American people and the world.

This isn't a choice, it is a necessity.

HIGHER EDUCATION ACT EXTENSION

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, I rise today to support the extension of the Higher Education Act. However, I would like to raise two issues.

First, I would have preferred a clean extension of this act as the other extensions have been.

Second, I am concerned about the impact this extension will have on the many other graduate students nationwide who rely on financial assistance, including students at Florida's Nova Southeastern University.

Nova Southeastern University's student body is unique with eighty percent pursuing graduate studies. This is the opposite of typical institutions where 80 percent of students are at the undergraduate level.

Nova holds the distinction of leading the Nation in postgraduate degrees awarded to Hispanic students.

Nova is also the largest originator of School as Lender loans in the country, and thus, is disproportionately affected by changes to the School as Lender Program.

The School as Lender Program allowed Nova to provide hundreds of millions of dollars in low-cost loans to students.

Premiums from the sale of those loans provided the university with millions of dollars annually which it used to educate its students. Nova maintains it helped keep their tuition rates down.

Denying Nova its ability to use these premiums for all students will hurt thousands of Nova students each year.

This extension also eliminates the ability of school lenders and eligible lender trustees to issue low-cost PLUS loans to graduate students. This change could increase the cost of graduate school for many students who need multiple loans to finish their degree.

For these reasons, I am disappointed this is not a clean extension, and I will continue to engage our Senate Education Committee leaders about this issue in the months ahead.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

LANCE CORPORAL PHILIP JOHNSON

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, today I rise to pay tribute to U.S. Marine Corps LCpl Philip A. Johnson, of Enfield, CT, a heroic young man who lost his life serving his country in Iraq on September 2, 2006. He was 19 years old.

Lance Corporal Johnson, a member of the weapons company of the 3rd Battalion, Second Marine Division based at Camp Lejeune, NC, was killed along with one other marine when a roadside bomb detonated as their unit was traveling from Ramadi.

Philip Johnson was the consummate American patriot. He dedicated his life to the U.S. Marine Corps and took immense pride in serving his country. As a little boy, Philip dreamed of being a marine and wasted no time in pursuing his goal. He joined a youth education and service organization named the Westover Young Marines at the age of 11, where he attained the rank of staff sergeant and served as a role model for younger members. Many who knew him remember his lifelong love of the Marine Corps, but they also remember him as a focused and thoughtful young man with a drive to help people. Philip was active in his church and committed to his faith.

Above all, Philip was eager to serve his country, so shortly after graduating from Enfield High School in 2005 he fulfilled his childhood dream by enlisting in the Marine Corps. As a marine, he continued to exhibit the exceptional determination and focus that defined his youth. Philip attained the rank of lance corporal in less than a year, an impressive feat that speaks volumes about his dedication to the Marine Corps.

Philip Johnson was a model marine, prepared to fight America's worst enemies and deeply committed to both the Corps and our Nation. Lance Corporal Johnson and others like him have made the ultimate sacrifice so that their fellow Americans can live in peace and security, and for that, we should be eternally grateful.

So today I salute Philip Johnson for his unwavering commitment to our Nation and the principles for which it stands. He was a young man of exceptional integrity and will be greatly missed. I wish to extend my deepest sympathies to his parents, Louis and Kathy, his sister, Jessica, and to all those who knew and loved him.

ARMY PFC NICHOLAS MADARAS

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, today I wish to speak in honor of U.S. Army PFC Nicholas Madaras, of Wilton, CT, who was killed in Iraq on September 3, 2006. He was 19 years old.

Private Madaras, a member of the 1st Battalion, 68th Armor Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, was fatally wounded when a bomb detonated near his dismounted patrol in Baqouba, Iraq.

A 2005 graduate of Wilton High School, Nicholas excelled both in the classroom and on the soccer field, where he started for 3 years and served as the team manager. Among the students, teachers, and coaches, he was known as a genuine person, one who led by example and cared about the people around him.

Nicholas enlisted in the Army shortly before graduation and arrived in Iraq in February of this year. He was proud to be a soldier and approached his assignment as a driver of a Humvee in a security escort with the same leadership and intensity that he brought to the soccer field. Despite the unimaginable hardships of war, Nicholas never lost his generous spirit. He persuaded his father to mail dozens of used soccer balls to his base because he could not stand to see the local children kicking tin cans. This act of kindness in the midst of cruelty and chaos clearly demonstrated the character of this exemplary young man.

PFC Nicholas Madaras was a patriot in the best sense of the word. He and others like him have given their lives in defense of our Nation's principles, and for that, all of us in Connecticut and across America owe them a deep debt of gratitude.

I salute Private Madaras for his tremendous service to our country, and wish to offer my deepest sympathies to his parents, William and Shalini, his sister Marie, his brother Christopher, and to everyone who knew and loved him.

NATIONAL CAPITAL TRANSPORTATION AMENDMENTS ACT

Mr. SARBANES. Mr. President, this legislation, the National Capital Transportation Amendments Act of 2006, authorizes a total of \$1,500,000,000 in matching Federal funds over the next 10 years to help sustain the Federal Government's longstanding commitment to the Washington Metropolitan area's Metrorail system.

In March, 2006, the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority celebrated the 30th anniversary of passenger service on the Metrorail system. Since service first began in 1976, Metrorail has grown from a 4.6-mile, five-station, 22,000-passenger system into the Nation's second busiest rapid transit operation. Today the Metrorail system consists of 106.3 miles, 86 stations and carries more than 100 million passengers a year. The Metrorail system provides a unified and coordinated transportation system for the region, enhances mobility for the millions of residents, visitors, and the Federal workforce in the region, promotes orderly growth and development of the region, enhances our environment, and preserves the beauty and dignity of our Nation's Capital. It is also an example of an unparalleled partnership that spans every level of government from city to State to Federal.

As the largest employer in this region, the Federal Government has had a longstanding and unique responsibility to support the Metro system. This special responsibility was recognized more than 40 years ago in the National Capital Transportation Act of 1960, when Congress found that "an improved transportation system for the National Capital region is essential for

the continued and effective performance of the functions of the Government of the United States." Today more than a third of Federal employees in this region rely on Metrorail to get to work, and at rush hour, more than 40 percent of Metro's riders are Federal employees. The service that WMATA provides is also a critical component of Federal emergency evacuation plans for the region. The Federal Government's interest in Metro is "unique and enduring."

It took extraordinary perseverance and effort to build the 106-mile Metrorail system. From its origins in legislation first approved by the Congress during the Eisenhower administration, three major statutes—the National Capital Transportation Act of 1969, the National Capital Transportation amendments of 1979, and the National Capital Transportation amendments of 1990—were enacted to provide Federal and matching local funds for construction of the system. In addition, in ISTEA, TEA-21 and most recently in SAFETEA-LU, we made the Metrorail eligible for millions of dollars in Federal funds annually to maintain and modernize the system, and provided an additional \$104 million for WMATA's procurement of 52 rail cars and construction of upgrades to traction power equipment on 20 stations to allow the transit agency to expand many of its trains from six to eight-cars.

But the system is aging and has been experiencing increasing incidents of equipment breakdowns, delays in scheduled service, and unprecedented crowding on trains. In 2004, WMATA released a "Metro Matters" report which found a \$1.5 billion shortfall in funding over 6 years to meet WMATA's capital and operating needs. A blue-ribbon panel, sponsored by the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, the Greater Washington Board of Trade and the Federal City Council, published a report a year later which concluded that WMATA faces an average annual operating and capital shortfall of approximately \$300 million between fiscal year 2006 and fiscal year 2015.

This legislation seeks to provide additional Federal funds to help close this gap. To be eligible for any Federal funds that may be appropriated annually under this legislation, the District of Columbia, the State of Maryland, and the Commonwealth of Virginia must first enact the required Compact amendments and either establish or use an existing dedicated funding source, such as Maryland's transportation trust fund, to provide the local matching funds. The legislation is still subject to the annual appropriations process, and it is my hope that Federal funding authorized under this act will be forthcoming in future years. I urge adoption of the legislation.

PREVENTING CIVILIAN CASUALTIES IN IRAQ

Mr. LEAHY. The heart wrenching reports of civilian casualties in Iraq,